

Message Text

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S E C R E T SANTIAGO 5689

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINS, PINT

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHILE

REF: SANTIAGO 5492; STATE 199097

1. SUMMARY: IN SEPT. 17 CONVERSATIONS WITH FONMIN CARVAJAL AND JUNTA MEMBER ADMIRAL MERINO, AMBASSADOR STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF IMPROVING CHILEAN HUMAN RIGHTS PICTURE SO THAT USG MIGHT BE ABLE TO BE AS HELPFUL TO CHILE AS POSSIBLE IN RESPONDING TO ITS NEEDS. BOTH CHILEANS ASSERTED THAT, AFTER ALL POSSIBILITIES FOR EXPLOITING GENERAL PINOCHET'S IDEA OF RELEASING DETAINEES AGAINST CORRESPONDING RELEASES BY CUBA AND THE USSR HAD BEEN EXPLOITED, HUNDREDS OF CHILEAN DETAINEES WOULD BE PERMITTED TO LEAVE COUNTRY. NEITHER, HOWEVER, CAN FULLY GRASP OUTSIDERS' CONCERN WITH PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS FOR DETAINEES. END SUMMARY.

2. IN DISCUSSION WITH FONMIN CARVAJAL, AMBASSADOR REMARKED THAT CHILEAN PROBLEM WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE MENTIONED DURING UNGA GENERAL DEBATE AND THAT CARVAJAL WOULD BE PRESSED TO DISCLOSE WHAT REAL CHANGES GENERAL PINOCHET'S SEPT. 11 STATEMENT HAD EMBODIED. FONMIN SAID THAT WHILE GOC WOULD NOT IMMEDIATELY RELEASE DETAINEES WITHOUT UNDERCUTTING ITS CHALLENGE TO CUBA AND USSR TO DO LIKEWISE, MANY DETAINEES WOULD EVENTUALLY BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE COUNTRY AND IT WAS HOPED THEY WOULD TAKE THEIR FAMILIES

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WITH THEM. AT THIS STAGE THE MATTER WAS IN HANDS OF INTERNATIONAL

RED CROSS, AND IT WOULD NOT BE EXPEDIENT TO MAKE ANY FURTHER PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

3. IN DISCUSSION WITH ADMIRAL MERINO, AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT OUR ABILITY TO EXTEND ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID TO CHILE WAS HAMPERED BY CONTINUING HUMAN RIGHTS CONTROVERSY. AMBASSADOR STATED PROCEDURES AND SAFEGUARDS WERE IMPORTANT TO US AND OTHER FOREIGN OBSERVERS: ON SEPT. 11 GENERAL PINOCHET HAD SAID THAT STATE OF WAR WAS REPLACED BY STATE OF INTERNAL DEFENSE BUT AS FAR AS WE COULD TELL THIS SEEMED TO BE A DISTINCTION WITHOUT A DIFFERENCE. IF IN FACT THIS WAS SO, THEN CHILEANS MUST EXPECT FOREIGN OBSERVERS TO SAY THAT THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT WAS ONLY A PROPAGANDA TRICK. SIMILARLY, IF THE RELEASE OF DETAINEES HAD TO AWAIT SIMILAR RELEASES BY CUBA AND THE SOVIET UNION, CHILE'S CREDIBILITY WOULD SUFFER.

4. ADMIRAL MERINO HAD OBVIOUSLY NOT FOCUSED ON THE LEGAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THE MOVE TO STATE OF SIEGE, BUT TOOK THE POINT AND PROMISED TO GET AN AUTHORITATIVE READING. AS TO DETAINEES, HE STATED THAT, SURPRISINGLY, MANY DID NOT APPEAR TO WANT TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY, AND THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE DIFFICULTIES IN FINDING COUNTRIES OF RECEPTION. QUERIED AS TO NUMBERS, HE MENTIONED A POSSIBLE FIGURE OF ABOUT 500. HE NOTED THAT PICTURE WAS COMPLICATED BY DECISION OF ARGENTINES TO RETURN TO CHILE SOME OF THE THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES THEY WERE NOW HARBORING.

5. COMMENT: IT SEEMS APPARENT THAT GOC WILL MOVE AHEAD WITH RELEASE OF MANY DETAINEES, AND WE WOULD GUESS THAT ULTIMATELY CHILEANS WILL DISPOSE OF THOSE WILLING TO LEAVE COUNTRY. IT WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT TO GET CHILE'S MILITARY LEADERSHIP TO GRASP THE NEED FOR GREATER PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS IN CONNECTION WITH ARRESTS FOR INTERNAL SECURITY PURPOSES. AS OPPORTUNITY OFFERS, WE WILL ATTEMPT TO DO SOME EDUCATIONAL WORK ON THIS SUBJECT, USING INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS TO ILLUSTRATE THE CONCERNS OF OUTSIDERS.
POPPER

NOTE BY OC/T: DISSEMINATION COORDINATED WITH S/S-O, MR. SARROS
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